

### Gov. Lee Press Briefing 7/8/2020

- Remarked on passing of Charlie Daniels – many tributes to his talent, iconic sound, but for me, I'm most impressed by his legacy of faith. We'll honor Daniels by lowering flags to half-staff from sunrise to sunset July 10
- State Capitol Commission will meet tomorrow to discuss future of the Nathan Bedford Forrest bust in the state capitol – vote will determine the location whether it will be at capitol or Tennessee State Museum – “we should learn from history and put it in the appropriate context.”
- Today marks the single highest case count since COVID-19 pandemic began, this also comes from a record number of tests. Unfortunately, the nationwide surge in testing, it also brings a delay in testing results
- You, Tennesseans, have responded to our call to seek testing, tested almost 1 million Tennesseans, but we need you to embrace another habit, to wear a mask, to protect your family and friends and the economy of TN
- [Strengthen mask requirements for 89 of 95 counties – grants mayors ability to issue mandates](#)
- Update on plans to reopen schools safely, both Dr. Piercey (TDH) and Schwinn (TN Dept. of Education) spoke at the White House as experts in the field
- [\\$81 million coronavirus relief grants for K-12 education institutions to assist schools in reopening plans](#) – so teachers and students can return safely.
- Commissioner Schwinn – priority is to make sure students and staff are safe, and all students get access to high quality education, putting out state guidance, toolkits for different forms of learning, technology, partnerships with PBS and Ready Rosie, allow teachers to diagnose learning gaps, report coming out soon from Child Wellbeing Task Force on impact of school closures so far and what's to come. Districts hard at work – continuous learning plans due July 24. Will continue to provide resources and new information every week. Tremendous honor to be in Washington yesterday – at the core, our students are young children who live in our homes and play in our communities, importance to provide high-quality education for families
- GL: “Thank you to the teachers, districts, superintendents facing situations they've never faced before, but they're stepping up to the challenge, the hard work of getting back to schools, grateful to community involvement and engagement. Together, we can create a safe opening for teachers and children.”
- Dr. Piercey (TDT) health report. Honor and privilege of being at White House yesterday to talk about reopening of schools. I'm a pediatrician and mother of four. This is a very real issue for me. I want to know my children and your children will be safe.
- Discussed
- We're focused on holistic needs of the child, in addition to learning, to making sure they are socially and emotionally well – this has been a struggle – they've missed friends and teachers, it's important to get them back in the classroom.
- Economic impact of having kids in schools – meaning parents and caregivers can go back to work.

- DOE and TDH working together on ways to support districts, students and parents in school reopening process – multiple toolkits and videos/resources, how to do bus transportation, how to do meals, education – what we’ve learned is there’s no one-size fits all – that requires flexibility – we encourage districts be flexible and transparent – we want districts to have an overarching framework – and reassurance for students and teachers
- Lab turnaround time – this is a national issue – we’ve heard delays of 7-sometimes up to 12 days to get results back from tests, this is unacceptable, can’t get people back to work if tests are negatives and can’t start contact tracing
- Reasons for delays are increase in testing and time it takes to complete tests – demand is now outpacing supply
- We have the ability to monitor lab turnaround time – look several times per week at 26 different labs across the state, watching on a daily basis, so we can direct to appropriate labs and build more capacity
- Labs are starting to prioritize which samples they run first (high risk, symptomatic, hospitalizations, etc. – “don’t avoid a test because you’re a lower priority” )
- Applaud efforts of masks and face coverings we’re seeing- applaud individuals and county leaders for recognizing importance of mask wearing – protect each other and helps businesses stay open and economy running
- The total COVID-19 case count for Tennessee is now 55,986 as of July 8, 2020 including 685 deaths, 950,540 tested, 3,023 hospitalizations and 32,736 recovered. Additional data [here](#)
- If you travel, [take these steps](#) to protect yourself & others from COVID-19 during your trip

#### **Q&A:**

- Local officials are seeing as cases rise, it is important to advocate for mask wearing, need to minimize the spread, included with social distancing, hand washing and sanitizing, staying home when sick
- Voting and mask wearing? GL: We encourage voters to wear masks, poll workers to wear masks
- GL: We need to learn how to live with this virus, to continue to operate our businesses, to continue the economy running and do things that will slow the spread
- ? on increase in case count today? Piercey – a reliable indicator is where the positivity rate is going – today’s positivity rate was 8.3% which is pretty much in line with what we’ve been seeing, this is not slowing down
- ?Pres. Trump mentioned possibility of withholding money or funding from schools who don’t reopen in the fall? GL: We don’t see that happening, Commissioner Schwinn is working with districts and superintendents, we don’t foresee that happening in TN.
- GL: Hospital capacity is the most important to be able to treat patients. This is the most important number for us.
- GL: make sure counties where we do see spikes are urgently advocating for the TN Pledge, for mask requirements, health approaches, we’re concerned and we’ll watch data and make decisions best for each community

- Dr. Piercey - # of hospitalized patients is going up on a daily basis, we've seen increases in Memphis & Nashville, now seeing increases in Knoxville, Chattanooga, Jackson and tri-cities too, want to make sure we have hospital beds and hospital staff
- GL: COVID-19 is a serious public health pandemic and is a real health crisis, people are losing their lives and we need to take it very seriously, individually Tennesseans can help prevent spread, we need you to buy into this process and help mitigate the spread, flatten the curve